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RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ SEP LIMA 0016  
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 4277  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 0009  
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 4954  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 002839

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KJUS](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MCAP](#) [CO](#)  
SUBJECT: AWA MASSACRE: MANY ALLEGATIONS, FEW CLEAR FACTS

REF: A. BOGOTA 2765  
[1](#)B. BOGOTA 1126

Classified By: DCM Brian A. Nichols, Reasons 1.4 (b and d)

SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (C) Prosecutor General Human Rights Unit Director Castro said the unit has no suspects and has made no arrests in conjunction with the August 26 massacre of 12 Awa near Tumaco (Narino). Another source close to the investigation discounted military or Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) involvement. Army Inspector General Suarez is tasked with an internal investigation. Members of the Awa community told us they believed members of the armed forces had committed the massacre. United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR) Chief of Mission Salazar expressed confidence in the investigators assigned to the case. Violence by the FARC and other armed groups has gripped Narino over the past year. According to the National Organization for the Indigenous of Colombia (ONIC), almost half of all indigenous murdered in 2009 were Awa. End Summary.

UNFOUNDED REPORTS OF ARREST IN MASSACRE CREATE STIR  
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[1](#)2. (U) Bogota daily El Tiempo reported September 1 that Jairo Miguel Pai Nastapuas--arrested in relation to the kidnapping of three Awa indigenous--was allegedly involved in the brutal August 26 massacre of 12 Awa, including six minors, in Narino (ref A). El Tiempo quoted the prosecutor in charge of the Pai case as saying he would not discard the possibility of interrogating Pai (an Awa indigenous himself) to determine whether he was involved in the massacre. The article reported Pai's motive for the massacre was a failed extortion attempt.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Awa People's Indigenous Unit (Unipa) spokesman Gabriel Bisbicus immediately announced investigators should not try to pin responsibility for the many recent violent deaths in Narino on the Awa. Members of a three-person Awa delegation to Bogota told us September 2 that Pai was an undemobilized paramilitary, but they did not believe he was involved in the massacre; instead they pointed to members of the military. They considered El Tiempo's quick guilty verdict of Pai "suspicious" and questioned whether this move

was deliberately intended to divert attention from military involvement.

#### FISCALIA INVESTIGATION SLOW TO START, BUT EXPERTS ON BOARD

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¶4. (C) Director of the Prosecutor General's (Fiscalia) Human Rights Unit Sandra Castro confirmed her unit had been tasked with the investigation into the murders. She told us the investigation was in its initial stages and that no suspects had been identified and no arrests had been made. She noted that the investigation has not advanced significantly since the Prosecutor General's office must follow Awa tradition and request permission from community leaders in order to interview witnesses. She assured us an excellent prosecutor is assigned to lead the case.

¶5. (C) UNHCHR Chief of Mission Christian Salazar reported on his three-day trip to Narino in a meeting of G-24 member embassies on September 2. Salazar expressed confidence in the chief prosecutor in charge of the investigation, who is the head of the Cali Prosecutor General's Regional Human Rights Unit. Salazar confirmed most members of the Awa community suspect military forces were involved because victim Tulia Garcia Guanga was the sole witness in the alleged May 'false positive'--military murder reported as combat death--homicide of her husband, Gonzalo Rodriguez. Salazar called for the military justice system to transfer the Rodriguez case to the ordinary justice system. He reported a small cocaine lab and coca field are located near the house where the massacre took place.

#### ONE PROSECUTOR DISCOUNTS SOME USUAL SUSPECTS

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¶6. (C) Another Prosecutor General representative familiar with the case cast doubt on the suspicions that the Colombian military committed the crime. He argued the massacre did not follow the military's traditional pattern of forced disappearance of witnesses to their 'false positive' crimes. He said military disappearances tended to focus on specific witnesses, not children or innocent bystanders. He confirmed the weaponry used were not normally carried by the Colombian military and that the unmarked camouflage reportedly worn by the aggressors was commonly used by illegal criminal groups. He also discounted FARC involvement as the guerrilla group tended to use automatic rifles and take credit for such actions to "prove a point."

#### IG SUAREZ TASKED WITH INTERNAL ARMY INVESTIGATION

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¶7. (C) Vice President Francisco Santos met with Luis Evelis Andrade, president of the ONIC on September 1. Andrade insisted that the Prosecutor General conduct a comprehensive investigation and identify the culprits. He said community members were afraid to testify for fear of reprisals. Santos assured Andrade that the government had initiated all appropriate measures to ensure a thorough and legitimate investigation. He added that Army Inspector General (IG) Major General Carlos Suarez was conducting an internal army investigation.

#### NO DEARTH OF THEORIES

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¶8. (C) In addition to El Tiempo's extortion report, theories and accusations abound as to the actors and motives for the murders. Human Rights Watch issued a press release August 27 alleging military involvement. Our source close to the Prosecutor General's investigation opined this could be a "narco vendetta." A Colombian National Police source suggested this was a revenge killing by the FARC because a family member had betrayed the guerrilla group.

#### VIOLENCE AGAINST AWA INCREASING IN 2009

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19. (U) The Tumaco area of Narino has been the scene of growing violence as the FARC, ELN, and virtually all criminal groups--Rastrojos, Aguilas Negras, Nueva Generacion--struggle for control of key drug trafficking routes. According to ONIC, the Awa have been at the center of this storm, with 38 Awa murdered in 2009--a figure which represents 49% of all indigenous murdered in the year. An ONIC report attributes 80% of violent actions against the Awa to the FARC, 7% to "paramilitary" and illegal groups, and 3% to the military. In a well known example of violence against the Awa, the FARC killed 12 community members in February (ref B).  
Brownfield